

INSPECTION REPORT

MILLFIELDS NURSERY SCHOOL

Bloxwich, Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104138

Headteacher: Mrs Lynda Myatt

Lead inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole

Dates of inspection: 15th – 17th November 2004

Inspection number: 270542

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	53
School address:	Lichfield Road Bloxwich Walsall West Midlands
Postcode:	WS3 3LU
Telephone number:	01922 714830
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Cooper
Date of previous inspection:	7 th December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Millfields Nursery is located in Bloxwich and draws its children from the locality, which is socio-economically below average. Currently, there are 106 children on roll (54 boys and 52 girls) and they attend part-time each day either in the morning or afternoon. Children start school around their third birthdays. The children's levels of achievement on entry to school are about average. Ten of the children have special educational needs. Almost all of the children are from white UK heritage backgrounds and none is at an early stage of learning English. The school has held beacon status and in 2004 was designated a Healthy School. It houses a neighbourhood nursery and works closely with the Walsall Academy. It provides opportunities for family learning and other adult education projects. The school moved to a new site in September 2003 and was given a delegated budget from April 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20891	Sean O'Toole	Lead inspector	English as an additional language; Foundation Stage curriculum.
14178	Patricia Willman	Lay inspector	
2818	Graham Warner	Team inspector	Special educational needs.

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING	15
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is **an excellent school** which is highly inclusive. The children achieve very well and most are working at levels beyond those expected for their age in the areas of learning. Highly effective leadership and management promote teaching and learning of very good quality. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children of all abilities make very good progress in all aspects of their learning
- Very effective teamwork and excellent leadership by the headteacher promote high quality education
- The stimulating teaching challenges the children and helps to create very good learning
- The curriculum is planned highly effectively and meets children's needs very well
- Staff are very caring and create an ethos of purpose and drive based on meeting the needs of individuals
- The school involves parents very effectively
- The governors' role in strategic planning and monitoring is at an early stage of development

The school has improved very well since it was last inspected in December 1998. Staff have successfully tackled the issues raised, and have improved the quality of education. Improved planning and assessment as well as more focused outdoor play have contributed to very effective teaching and learning. Incisive and determined leadership and management have contributed to raising the quality of education provided and the achievement of all groups of children. The school is in a strong position to build upon its considerable strengths.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The **children achieve very well** in the areas of learning and make very good progress. Attainment and achievement have improved since the previous inspection. On starting school, most children have levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are about those expected for their age, although there is a wide spread of abilities. The staff are highly successful in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development and this equips them to work independently and access all aspects of the curriculum. By the time they leave the school, most children are working at levels which are in advance of those expected for their age in all of the areas of learning. The children achieve very well in communication, language and literacy and most speak competently using a broad range of vocabulary. Their early reading and writing skills are good for their age. The children make very good progress in mathematical development and have a secure grasp of basic number; they are especially good at recognising shapes and in exploring different ways of measuring. The stimulating curriculum enables children to achieve very well in physical and creative development as well as in knowledge and understanding of the world.

Boys and girls make very good progress and are equally successful. Children with special educational needs achieve very well because the staff are highly skilful in pinpointing what needs to be done to move learning on. The staff make very good use of assessment to pinpoint the needs of the different ability groups. More able children are set demanding tasks. The school is successful in meeting its ambitious targets through effective performance management and analysis of the children's work.

The staff create a happy atmosphere in which children thrive and promote the **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively**. The children are eager and enthusiastic learners who maintain high levels of concentration. Their very positive attitudes and very good behaviour contribute much to learning. Staff prepare the children very well for life in a culturally diverse society, introducing them to a wide range of traditions and festivals. Although attendance is not statutory the staff work successfully to encourage the parents to bring their children to school. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **very good quality of education, including very good teaching and learning**. Staff have high levels of expertise in understanding how young children learn and this is reflected in thorough planning which clearly identifies strategies to support the learning of the different abilities in the school. Very good assessment accurately measures children's understanding and plays a significant part in helping staff to pitch their teaching at the right level. There are excellent relationships between staff and children. The staff have high expectations of the children and this is tempered by a thorough understanding of individual need. The teaching of children with special educational needs is especially effective as staff have a clear understanding of how to promote learning in small steps through practical work and provide well focused individual support. The staff are especially skilful in intervening to move learning on and in stepping back and allowing children to make their own decisions and to explore new ideas or resources. Sessions are well organised and include a very effective balance of activities. The teaching of all areas of learning is very good and there is a strong focus on communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The skilful way in which the staff link the areas of learning helps to promote understanding. The children are excited by the opportunities provided and grow in confidence and competence; they work hard and show much pleasure in their own and others' achievements. A particular strength is in their ability to cooperate. The school provides an excellent and inclusive curriculum, which meets children's needs very well. The staff follow the children's interests and make very good use of resources to stimulate learning. Staffing levels are very good. The accommodation is satisfactory and staff make very good use of the limited space.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are highly effective. All staff are ambitious for the children and provide excellent role models under the determined and inspiring leadership of the headteacher. Monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning are an integral part of the school's drive for continued improvement. The management of the curriculum is excellent. The governing body provide good support to the school and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They are at an early stage of developing their role in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The administration is very effective and well established procedures linked to effective performance management ensure that the school runs smoothly. The school has managed the introduction of delegation very well. Finances are managed effectively and funds spent wisely. The school makes good use of the principles of best value when purchasing supplies and services.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents speak highly of the work of the school and are very impressed at the rapid progress made by their children. The children love their teachers and thoroughly enjoy school being eager and excited learners.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to build upon its success:

- Extend the governors' expertise and involvement in strategic planning and monitoring

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Standards have improved since the previous inspection and boys and girls achieve very well in all of the areas of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development
- By the time they leave the nursery children's attainment is above that expected for their age
- Children with special educational needs make very good progress
- More able children make very good strides in their development

Commentary

1. Attainment on admission to the school is average. The school admits children with a full range of abilities and through very good teaching meets their needs well. Most children start school shortly after their third birthday. They settle quickly into the school's routines and make very good gains in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave the school most children have developed skills which have prepared them well for the next stage of their education. Children are competent and confident learners who work hard, are aware of others and have a good sense of responsibility. Children of different abilities benefit from the challenging and inclusive curriculum. Those with special educational needs are identified early and through careful monitoring, well crafted individual education plans and high quality support they make very good progress, although their attainment is below that expected for their age. More able children are given very good opportunities to explore different ways of learning and they achieve very well because staff intervene at the right moment to set new challenges. There is very little difference in the performance of boys and girls because staff are very aware of the needs of both groups of children.
2. Progress and achievement in communication, language and literacy are very good. By the time they leave the school the children are working at a level above that expected for their age. Children are competent in speaking and listening and about a third attain the early learning goals in this aspect of their work. The children love reading and listen intently to stories. They understand that text conveys meaning and join in enthusiastically when they recognise the main phrases in a well known tale. Children explore writing through indoor and outdoor activities and many are beginning to form recognisable letters and to "write" lists and stories independently by the time they leave the school. Similarly very good progress is made in mathematical development and the children are working at levels in advance of those expected. They have a good knowledge of shape and measures, which they use well when creating patterns. More able children attain the goals expected by the end of the Foundation Stage in this aspect of their work.

They count competently and, through very good experiences in using resources, competently match and sort. Progress in learning mathematical vocabulary is very good.

3. The children's very good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development helps them to achieve levels in advance of those expected for their age. The vibrant curriculum includes challenge in all aspects of these areas of learning. Children are good at designing and making models and make good links with measuring. They are fascinated by computers, and have good skills in accessing and using a variety of programs. Children's scientific knowledge is good. They carefully observe living things and show much interest and care for the world around them. They experiment with a wide variety of textures and materials. Creative development is promoted very well and the children excel in this aspect of their learning with many close to attaining the early learning goals by the time they leave the school. They competently use a wide variety of media and have very good skills in mixing paint and identifying colour. They perform well in dance and have a good sense of rhythm. Role-play is enhanced through very good resources and opportunities for the children to use imaginative and creative language. Older children often take the lead in these activities and this engages the interest of younger children and promotes language very well. The provision for physical development has improved much since the previous inspection. Most children are close to attaining the early learning goals in physical development by the time they leave the school. They move with confidence and show good balance when climbing. They make very good progress in using a variety of tools and equipment with precision. Their physical development is enhanced through the use of high quality resources.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The children respond very well to the very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural values promoted by the school. As a result, they thoroughly enjoy school, behave very well and their personal, social and emotional development is very good. Most parents bring their children to the nursery regularly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children often become totally absorbed in the many interesting and exciting activities
- There are excellent relationships between the children and the adults who work with them
- All staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and work consistently and successfully to achieve this
- A very small number of parents do not bring their children to the nursery regularly enough

Commentary

4. Because the school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well the children understand what is expected of them and begin to develop the confidence to explore and experiment. The discovery room is a source of endless fascination for the children, providing them with opportunities to experiment with light and sound developing an awareness of mystery. Children are constantly encouraged to make their own independent choices and this successfully builds on their growing self-confidence. They are allowed to make mistakes and to learn from them. This developing confidence is evident in the way the children move from one activity to another, observing the routines of the classroom and sharing the resources with good humour. Parents are very supportive of the values promoted by the school and this is an important element in the children's on-going personal, social and emotional development.
5. The children clearly understand what their teacher's expect of them, they collaborate well together, taking turns and helping each other. Much excitement was generated by the visit of an artist when children excitedly explored colours and textures, made their own play dough, mixed

it with enthusiasm and chose colouring before rolling out and making shapes. One child carefully packed her shapes into a bag to take home. The children become involved in stories and are eager to ask questions and offer their own ideas. They begin to identify with the characters and enjoy retelling their favourite sections. Visits are arranged to local places of interest and this has a very good impact on the children's social and cultural development. Religious festivals are celebrated and this widens the children's perspective of the importance and excitement associated with other cultures and beliefs. The nursery is full of wonderful sparkly Divali displays which the children have created. The children are interested, inquisitive and friendly individuals who are thriving in the stimulating atmosphere in the nursery. The high quality of these aspects of children's development has been maintained very well since the last inspection.

6. Although most parents bring their children to school very regularly and on time, there is a small number who do not and reasons for absence are not always forthcoming.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9%	School data	6.2%

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education underpinned by very effective teaching and learning. The quality has improved since the previous inspection.

Teaching and learning

Imaginative and challenging teaching creates an atmosphere in which children become very effective learners. Teaching meets the needs of all very well and prepares the children for the next stage of their education. Staff skilfully assess the children's progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff make learning fun and create very good links between the areas of learning
- Staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn and provide very good opportunities to learn through play
- Children with special educational needs are taught very effectively
- The children are independent and highly motivated learners who respond to challenge

Commentary

7. The school has built upon the strengths in teaching reported at the time of the previous inspection. Staff are very knowledgeable about how young children learn and use every opportunity to stimulate interest and enthusiasm. The children respond eagerly to the wide ranging opportunities provided and rise to the high levels of challenge set. Underpinning the teaching is high quality planning. Staff have a thorough knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and understand the needs of each child. This is reflected in planning which includes sharply focussed objectives geared to meeting the needs of children of different abilities. Each session is prepared very thoroughly and staff are very clear about their responsibilities. They share objectives with the children who become very excited about the opportunities provided. During these briefing sessions the staff support the children in planning what they are going to do. As a result, the children are instantly engaged and remain focussed on their tasks for long periods of time. The nursery benefits from high quality resources which are used very effectively to stimulate children's desire to learn. Staff are especially skilful in assessing how well the children are doing. They make detailed and accurate written observations during each session and use the results of this information to plan the next steps in learning. This skilful approach ensures that children have very good opportunities to consolidate their learning and to extend their thinking.
8. Children with special educational needs benefit from very good teaching. Staff are well informed about the particular needs of individuals. They use well crafted individual education plans to teach specific skills and measure the children's progress perceptively, showing high levels of care and interest in the children. Those who are new to the school are taught very well within family groups. The staff allow new or less confident children to adjust to working alongside others and show much skill in drawing these less confident children into activities with a word of encouragement or praise. This has a significant impact on the children's personal, social and emotional development. Due to thorough assessment staff also identify the more able and,

through their use of well focussed questions, set challenges for these children to move learning on at a very good rate.

9. One of the reasons for highly successful teaching is the link made between the different areas of learning. Staff seize every opportunity to extend basic skills in a way which the children find interesting and, as a result, the children become very effective learners. The children maintain high levels of concentration, work very well independently and the older ones, in particular, collaborate effectively. This was seen to good effect in an excellent session when the children used play dough to create mathematical shapes which were then set in plaster of Paris. The children experimented with the dough and made shapes using their knowledge and good mathematical vocabulary to name the shapes and talk about their properties. Children are encouraged to make choices and the staff provide just the right level of guidance to ensure that the children can pursue their own interests and benefit from the direct teaching of skills.

10. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is given a high priority. Staff encourage speaking and listening very effectively in small group sessions. They speak clearly to the children and expect them to respond. The staff use correct technical terms and this enables the children to communicate effectively. There are very good opportunities to listen to stories, learn songs and, through the use of the library, to develop a love of books. In most activities there are opportunities for the children to write. They draw up lists and write their names. The teaching of mathematical development is very good. There is a strong focus on promoting awareness of number in the environment. Staff encourage counting, matching numbers to objects and include a strong emphasis on space, shape and measures. They build on experiences step by step so that the children are very secure in learning new mathematical ideas and vocabulary.

11. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development is very good. Excellent use is made of the resources to provide opportunities for the children to experiment and explore. Skilful intervention and highly focussed questions contribute very effectively to the children’s sense of wonder at the world around them. In the discovery room children were held spellbound by the use of an overhead projector. They worked tenaciously to explore different sources of light and the teacher’s high expectations and use of imaginative and descriptive language moved learning on at a very good pace.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (11%)	21 (60%)	10 (29%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The vibrant, interesting and challenging curriculum meets the needs of all children highly effectively. There are many excellent opportunities to enrich the children’s experiences. Staffing levels are very good and there are very good resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is planned thoroughly and incorporates the children’s ideas and interests
- The school strongly emphasises children’s personal, social and emotional development
- There are very good links between the areas of learning which enhance the children’s understanding
- The school makes very good provision for children with particular social and learning needs
- The school has high quality resources

Commentary

12. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection and issues regarding outdoor play have been dealt with very effectively. The curriculum meets the needs of children of all abilities and backgrounds because the planning is sharply focussed, linked to the Foundation Stage curriculum and based on a deep understanding of the children's needs. The curriculum meets all requirements very well and is enriched excellently by wide ranging opportunities which challenge and enthuse the children. Staff are always looking for ways to make learning fun and purposeful and this is reflected in their ambition for the children to succeed.
13. The school is highly inclusive and the provision for special educational needs is very effective. The individual education plans are precise and accurate. Staff make very good use of them when planning work and in assessing the children's progress. Staff have high levels of expertise in working with these children and extend their knowledge through attendance on a range of courses. The provision has a significant impact on the way in which children learn and especially on their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills. The school is very aware of the differing needs of boys and girls and the curriculum is planned to ensure that these groups of children gain maximum benefit from the activities provided.
14. The school is innovative in its approach to developing the curriculum. The very good links with the Walsall Academy provide wonderful opportunities for the children to work in a library, use a state of the art theatre and to eat in a high quality restaurant. The involvement of an artist in residence provides children with exciting opportunities to experience new skills and techniques which enable them to achieve very well. Visits in the local community and visitors to the school provide children with an understanding of the world around them and their part in it.
15. The school has adapted very well to its new building which is equipped with high quality resources to meet the needs of the children in all areas of learning. However, the accommodation is rather cramped. Staff have been imaginative in making use of the limited space available and each of the areas of learning is organised very well. Staff have high levels of expertise and contribute to learning and personal development very well. The very strong commitment to personal, social and health education ensures that children feel safe and secure and this enables them to thrive in an environment of care. There is a very good number of staff to support children's learning. They have much experience and expertise and develop their skills through further training.

Care, guidance and support

The children at this nursery school receive an outstanding quality of care. Excellent relationships and the high levels of staff expertise ensure that each child receives an excellent level of support, advice and guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The kindness, dedication and sensitivity of all staff ensure that parents and children feel completely confident that any problems will be handled quickly and effectively
- The provision for each child's individual needs is excellent
- The structured induction arrangements are excellent

Commentary

16. The school is a clean, well-organised and stimulating environment and there is a high level of awareness of the importance of health and safety issues. Regular checks are made of the routines

and premises and appropriate records are kept. Fire evacuation is practised regularly and the provision for first aid is very good. The headteacher has overall responsibility for child protection issues and awareness amongst all staff of the crucial nature of this aspect of care is very high. Supervision of the children whilst in the outside play area and on visits is very good and the children are taught how to move around and play safely inside.

17. The children have complete trust in their teachers and know that they will help them if they are unhappy. Staff closely monitor children's personal, social and emotional development and plan support and activities pertinent to their individual needs. Any emerging concerns are identified early and, in close consultation with parents, appropriate action taken. Staff listen to the children and encourage them to make their own decisions. In this way, their particular likes, dislikes and individual skills have an influence on the activities planned for them. There are excellent opportunities for parents to talk to staff at the beginning and end of each session to pass on any concerns, or simply to stay with their child until he or she is happily settled. The induction process for new parents and children is excellent enabling staff to form a clear picture of a child's needs and to build a supportive and positive relationship with parents prior to the child joining the nursery. This ensures that the children arrive at school happily and parents have confidence that their small children will be well cared for. These high standards of provision have been maintained very well since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents. There are strong links with the local community and very good and mutually beneficial partnerships with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a very high regard for the work of the school
- The quality of information provided for parents about their children's progress is very good
- The school provides a wide range of good opportunities for parents to learn how to help their children at home and to develop their own skills
- The relationship with the adjacent Academy is excellent

Commentary

18. The school provides very good information for parents about the school. The prospectus, for example, clearly tells parents what they need to know about their child's first step into formal education. Regular newsletters are sent out to keep parents informed about upcoming events and information about what the children are learning is displayed around the nursery. The induction process includes excellent information about the learning purpose of many of the activities the children take part in. Informal contact between parents and staff is an integral part of each day and inspection evidence shows strong, friendly and supportive relationships between many parents and those who teach their small children. Parents are formally invited to meet with staff to discuss their child's progress each term and are welcome to ask for more information if they need it. Parents of those children with special educational needs are fully involved in the decision making process. They generously support the fund raising activities and take great pride in the contribution they have made to the development of the discovery room. Most parents play an important role in helping and encouraging their children with their learning and are keen to learn different ways to help them at home. In conjunction with other schools in the area, parents are offered a range of interesting courses and workshops which many attend enthusiastically. Formal and informal consultation with parents is a regular feature of the school and this strengthens the partnership.

19. The children visit interesting places within the local community and a number of specialist visitors come into school to extend the children's learning. Very good systems ensure effective transition to the next stage of education and strong, mutually beneficial links exist with other schools in the area. The relationship with the Walsall Academy is excellent. The children use some of the Academy's facilities, for example the library and the theatre, which to a small extent compensates for the limited space in the nursery.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Excellent leadership and management promote a sense of purpose and drive. The headteacher leads with vision and creativity and has built a high performing team which is totally committed to providing quality education for the children. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's very positive climate for learning is the result of total commitment to meeting the needs of the children
- Staff share responsibilities and are imaginative in looking for ways to improve
- The monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum is very effective
- The school makes very good use of data to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance
- The governors are at an early stage of involvement in strategic planning and monitoring
- The school has adjusted well to delegation and makes good use of available funds

Commentary

20. The excellent headteacher supported by a highly competent staff has built upon the many strengths highlighted in the previous report. All issues raised have been tackled and the quality of education has improved. The headteacher has successfully led the staff through the change of the school's location and empowered the staff to adapt and modify the curriculum to meet the children's changing needs and to overcome the constraints of limited space. The leadership of high quality is inspired by the ideal that every child should reach his or her full potential. This is achieved through highly effective systems and procedures which ensure that staff work consistently. Staff share a common vision and create an ethos in which quality and achievement run hand in hand. All staff are ambitious for the children and aware of their potential so that planning, the curriculum and teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated with rigour.
21. The headteacher monitors the progress of the children assiduously and the information is used to check on the quality of teaching and learning. There is regular monitoring of how children learn and a vision for improvement. The staff share responsibilities for planning, but the headteacher and her senior teacher oversee this and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The leadership of the provision for special educational needs is very effective. There are very good procedures for performance management and all staff have clear targets and the opportunity to engage in professional development.
22. The school is very well organised. There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and flexibility in approach and commitment to serving the children means that there is a strong and effective team. The school's systems are flexible, enabling staff to cope with new initiatives. All staff are well informed and confident. The headteacher is perceptive and skilful in anticipating the needs of children and staff. Because of the well organised learning and very good teaching, the school makes an ideal provider of training for students.
23. The recently appointed governing body has made a good start in supporting the school's work. It has ensured that statutory requirements are met by providing good policies and procedures to

support equal opportunities, race equality and access for people with disabilities. Governors are proud of the school's success and aware of its strengths. They are forward thinking in their use of the budget and have ensured that the school is well resourced and staffed at a good level. However, their role in strategic planning is at an early stage of development. The school has clear plans for the future and its priorities are realistic and achievable. There are suitable timescales for completion and success is measured through the performance of staff and children. The governing body has played a good part in monitoring the provision for special educational needs and has plans to extend this monitoring role to the areas of learning.

24. The school manages its finances well. Following the recent delegation of budgets, the headteacher and administrative staff have worked together very effectively to identify trends in spending. Currently, most services are purchased from the local authority. The school follows the principles of best value when purchasing supplies. The administrative assistant is very well organised and, as a result, bureaucracy for teaching staff is reduced, enabling them to concentrate on the children's learning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff plan very well to meet the needs of each child
- The children achieve very well and most are in advance of expectations for their age
- Very good teaching equips the children to cope with a variety of styles of learning
- The provision is managed very well

Commentary

25. Children achieve very well and by the time they leave the school most are at a level which is above that expected for their age in their personal, social and emotional development. This very good progress by boys and girls is due to the strong emphasis on meeting the needs of individuals and the setting of challenging opportunities which extend the children. Those with special educational needs start school with quite immature skills but through well focused individual support and much encouragement they make very good progress. More able children are close to attaining the early learning goals in this area of learning by the time they leave the school. The school's provision for personal, social and emotional development contributes significantly to the children's success in the other areas of learning.
26. The highly effective ways in which the children are introduced to the school ensure that almost all settle very quickly and learn to work alongside others. The children are very keen and rush into school to join their groups. This starter session is used very well to set the objectives for the day and to explain to the children what is available; it is especially helpful to the less confident. The staff know the children and provide a stimulating environment and exciting opportunities to stimulate learning. The children soon establish constructive relationships with adults and other children because staff provide excellent role models. Through very good planning, adults ensure that the children have experiences of working on their own and in groups of different sizes. The interesting and exciting activities motivate and enthuse the children, stimulate a desire to learn and foster concentration and perseverance. Children were often observed working for long periods, absorbed in tasks. One group concentrated on exploring the properties of play dough, made geometric shapes and talked excitedly about the patterns they were making. The staff intervene at just the right point in such activities and move learning on very well through well focused suggestions and questions.
27. The whole session is planned to achieve a balance between direct teaching and individual learning and the children thrive in this atmosphere. Throughout the nursery there is a sense of purpose and calm in which the children's learning prospers. The children are thoughtful and considerate to each other and any immature behaviour is dealt with positively through encouragement and diversion to enable all children to learn respect and tolerance of others. Children's decision making skills are well developed. They often plan their own work and are very willing to talk about what they have done. The children enjoy helping the staff and take responsibility for carrying the registers to the office and for tidying away which they do enthusiastically. They are polite and well mannered and remember the conventions of saying *please* and *thank you*.

28. In group time the staff initiate learning and focus on developing a variety of skills which span the areas of learning. The children join in well, work together effectively and become increasingly aware of others. Many incidents of sharing and taking turns were observed and cooperative role play was used very well to promote social and communication skills. The staff promote the children's awareness of similarities and differences very effectively. There are very good opportunities to celebrate festivals and traditions from many cultures and the children show much pleasure in, for example, Indian dancing. The children gain a good appreciation of the environment and care for living things through their outdoor play and by observing the African land snails.
29. This area of learning is led and managed very well and is an integral part of all the school does. There is consistency among all staff in promoting values. Careful records and assessments of the children's progress in personal, social and emotional development are kept and used to identify any specific needs. Staff work hard to inform and involve parents in this very important aspect of child development.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Progress and achievement are very good
- This area of learning is led and managed very effectively

Commentary

30. Children come into the school with a wide range of communication, language and literacy skills, which are average overall. Regardless of their ability, the children make very good progress because of the high level of skills and intervention by the staff. As a result, by the time they leave the school they are working at a level above that expected for their age and more able children are close to achieving the early learning goals. The high quality of the teaching ensures that the children learn very well because they consistently build on previous knowledge and understanding. Children with special needs are extremely well supported by all staff. They make very good progress as a result of the very good individual education plans provided for them which clearly identify their specific learning needs. Different levels of tasks are clearly identified in teachers' planning and the rigorous use of assessment ensures that tasks are matched to the abilities of the children. This results in consistent progress by boys and girls. The provision in communication, language and literacy has improved since the previous inspection.
31. The children's speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed when they come together to share the outcomes of their learning. Staff take careful control so that all have opportunities to talk and listen to one another. Everyone is focused in these discussions because staff make use of very good resources, such as photographs taken by the children themselves, to make responses more meaningful. Puppets are used perceptively by staff to capture the imagination of the children. Speaking in sentences is encouraged and staff provide good role models in speaking clearly and articulately. The children have numerous opportunities to develop their love of reading. They listen to stories intently, joining in with familiar phrases in their stories enthusiastically. A particularly good feature is the use of the library. Parents and carers have times when they share library books with the children that they then take home for a week. There is real delight in these times for sharing that helps the children to understand that the

words and pictures combine to have meaning in reading. Children explore writing in both their indoor and outdoor activities. Outdoors they “write” about the shapes that they gleefully discover on their walk around the school building. Indoors they compile a shopping list before visiting the hardware shop set up in their role play area. These activities are all very well organised to support the growing independence of the children in their development of their communication skills.

32. Staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn and achieve a very good balance between intervening and guiding the children and allowing them to explore and investigate on their own or in small groups. Planning is meticulous and open ended enough to allow the children to pursue their interests. High quality relationships between the staff and children and the high expectations of the staff ensure that learning is purposeful and fun. The school has very good resources which are used creatively to enhance learning. In the excellent hardware shop the children buy and sell real tools and equipment and staff encourage meaningful conversation which extends the children vocabulary.
33. The perceptive and imaginative leadership of the subject ensures that all staff are kept up to date on new initiatives. Careful monitoring of planning and teaching bring consistency of approach. The use of accurate assessment and observations mean that a good check is kept on the children’s progress.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good
- Children achieve very well and their attainment is above average for their age
- The subject is very well managed
- Links between the areas of learning contribute much to the children’s progress

Commentary

34. The children make very good progress in their mathematical development and their achievement is very good. By the time they leave the school most children are working at a level in advance of that expected for their age. More able children are close to achieving the early learning goals. Those with special educational needs achieve very well because their learning is guided by well crafted individual education plans and very effective individual adult support.
35. Throughout the school children are very successful in recognising and naming shapes. The wealth of practical opportunities to observe shape around them and to make, draw and build, enhance their understanding. In an excellent lesson, children walked around the site and using binoculars and cameras found circles, triangles and rectangles which they drew and photographed. They printed off their work and then discussed what they had found coming to a real understanding of the properties of the shapes. The children’s intense concentration and collaborative skills were very much in evidence as they competently sorted, matched and counted using an excellent range of resources to help them. There are very good opportunities for the children to begin to record numbers and staff seize opportunities to introduce concepts such as addition and subtraction through practical activities.
36. The very good teaching stimulates a desire to learn and thorough planning ensures that the children build on their skills, knowledge and understanding consistently through a wide range of opportunities for play. The staff capitalise on the children’s fascination for numbers and make

learning fun by teaching number rhymes and games and by providing opportunities for practical mathematics such as buying and selling from the well equipped hardware shop. Another strength in the teaching is the way in which staff promote mathematical vocabulary. Every opportunity is taken to count and when lining up or preparing for a task the adults use words such as *before*, *after*, *middle*, *more* and *less* to help the children to gain in understanding. Assessment is an integral part of each session and the staff are vigilant in ensuring that the children's progress is recorded and assessed. This information is used to highlight the need for further work or to inform planning so that the more able are given challenging tasks. The staff have a well developed understanding of how children learn and arouse enthusiasms by preparing activities which draw the children's attention. They are confident about mathematics and are well aware of the links between the different strands of the area of learning and how links can be made with other areas of the curriculum. Their questions encourage the children to think not just about finding answers but stimulate them to identify patterns and solutions and this prepares the children very well for the next stage of their mathematical education.

37. This area of learning is led and managed very effectively and all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Planning is linked very effectively to the other areas of learning and monitored very well. Assessment is sharp and accurate and leads to the setting of demanding work which moves learning on at a very good rate. The school's resources for mathematical development are excellent and imaginative use of them and the environment around enhance children's understanding.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Children achieve very well and they work at a level above that expected for their age
- Very effective links are made with other areas of learning

Commentary

38. The children's inquisitive nature is rapidly developed through the many carefully structured experiences presented to them by staff. Boys and girls of all abilities make very good progress. There is very good provision for children with learning difficulties and the very effective support provided means that these children take a full part in the rich and varied opportunities and activities. The very good achievement of the children reflects the very good teaching by committed staff. The provision has improved since the previous inspection.
39. Links between the areas of learning enhance the children's understanding. The children make very good use of their outdoor environment because they have been instrumental in the choices made about their activities. They explore different directions as they move with care on flat and mounds of land. Indoors they make accurate comparisons between the past and the present when they visit the Academy library and use well chosen artefacts and photographs. They make very careful observations of living things such as the African snails and can talk about them in an informed way. The children make expert use of natural materials such as clay, which also supports the development of their creative skills. The children make regular use of computers to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They log into programs confidently and control the mouse skilfully. There are regular bursts of excitement as the computer tells them

more about their world and the children are keen to share this with others. A particularly significant support to the children's learning is when they have opportunities to work in the discovery room. They explore sources of light in a number of different ways with high levels of interest making imaginative use of the high quality resources.

40. Planning is very effective and is carefully constructed to ensure that the children benefit from a wide range of experiences and receive direct teaching as well as having opportunities to find out for themselves. One of the skills in teaching is the way in which the staff seize upon ideas from the children and use them as a springboard for new learning. Staff also very perceptively ask a range of open-ended questions that move the children on in their learning. There is good use of books to encourage the children to find out more about what they have learned. The curriculum is very well balanced and includes structured discussions to develop the children's technical vocabulary.
41. The leadership and management of this area of learning are very effective. All aspects of the children's work are monitored carefully. Assessment is a strength because it is based on detailed observations which pinpoint exactly the achievements of the children. A rigorous check is kept on the children's progress and this ensures that the staff guide the children to a well balanced programme of activities.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve standards which are in advance of those expected for their age
- The children make very good progress as a result of very good teaching
- Provision is managed very well in a cramped space

Commentary

42. Children are at very different levels of physical development when they start school. They are encouraged to develop their physical skills effectively through taking part in a rich variety of activities. Children with special educational needs are fully integrated and the very effective support provided ensures that they make very good progress. The challenging activities contribute much to the very good progress of all boys and girls. The school has improved the provision significantly since the previous inspection.
43. Outdoors the school has created an exciting environment in a small, but adequate, area. This means that the children learn quickly to move with care and skill. The staff very closely supervise the use of equipment such as wheeled toys and encourage the children to be inventive in making up their own games and rules, for example, in using the stop sign to control speed. The high quality resources stretch the children both physically and intellectually as they find different ways of moving and solving problems. They use the tunnel and wooden bars with dexterity as they strengthen arms particularly well. Children are very persistent in improving their skills, moving with confidence as well as skill. There is also very good teaching of physical development in the indoor activities. Staff take great care with the activities chosen in order to use the cramped space safely and constructively. Staff choose music carefully to support the children's indoor movements. Thought and care is taken by the children without detracting from the spontaneous nature of their responses to the music. Children use tools and scissors to develop their smaller physical skills very well.

44. The very effective teaching is the result of high quality planning and its sensitive interpretation by the staff. The staff know their children very well, care deeply about their welfare and carefully assess what is appropriate for each child. They make suggestions to the children to move learning on and play alongside the less confident to help them to improve their skills and competence. The children use their imaginations very well because the staff provide resources which stimulate and challenge. The bags of apparatus hung outside are used frequently by the children to develop and practise skills they have learned inside.
45. Very effective leadership and management underpin this area of learning. The staff plan together and make very good links between the areas of learning. Much thought is given to using outdoor play to extend the children's personal, social and emotional development and to improve their communication, language and literacy skills. All staff are involved in assessment and observation and this information is used very well to plan the next stages in learning. Senior staff monitor the planning and teaching effectively. Record keeping is detailed and used well to inform parents of their children's progress.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above those normally found by the time children leave the school
- Teaching and learning are very good
- Children make very good progress and achieve very well

Commentary

46. The children are presented with a many exciting activities to develop their creative skills which result in very good progress. The activities are often designed to develop skills in other areas of learning such as mathematical and knowledge and understanding of the world skills at the same time. Children with special educational needs make very good progress in the extension of the creative skills, and achieve very well. The children are well prepared for their next stage of learning and achieve standards above those normally found by the time they leave the school. The provision has been developed effectively since the previous inspection.
47. The children work with enthusiasm largely because they are delighted with what they are producing. They maintain high levels of concentration and practise and refine their skills with patience. When the children have the opportunity to work with a visiting artist their skills are considerably extended. The children find out about different textures as they work adroitly with plaster of paris to make casts of shapes. This activity successfully built on the children's experiences of printing on materials. Staff are creative in planning and develop a sense of curiosity in the children. In one session the children explored texture and shape by experimenting with jelly and spaghetti; much discussion and extended language was drawn out from this by the skilful adults. Role-play is used extensively to encourage the children's imaginations and high quality resources are used. These activities are enhanced through the involvement of adults who ask well focused questions, encourage counting and matching and pose problems which challenge the children's thinking. The children also learn that music helps them to move in different ways as they listen to a tape of Divali music and interpret its rhythm successfully. In one very good lesson the adult encouraged the children to think about the sounds and gradually introduced a wide variety of movements drawing out examples from the children. The end result was very pleasing as the children improved their grace in movement and also showed much

appreciation of another cultural tradition. The children sing sweetly as they practise number rhymes and enjoy the informal opportunities to listen to music and to play a range of instruments.

48. Teaching is very good. The activities give the children many opportunities to use a variety of carefully chosen media. The staff expect the children to take responsibility and to clear away. When they use paints the children are already able to mix colours so that they are finding out about shading accurately. Staff use correct vocabulary and expect the children to do the same; this contributes well to the children's progress in communication, language and literacy. Planning is detailed and thorough and ensures the consistent development of skills, knowledge and understanding. High expectations underpin the staff's work and the children catch the infectious enthusiasm of the adults and work hard to improve their skills.
49. Leadership and management of the creative area of learning are very good. The children's progress is monitored well. The adults make sharply focused observations and keep careful records of what the children are able to do. They take opportunities to link creative development with the other areas of learning and this works very well in helping children to grasp new ideas and to extend their spoken language and social skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	1
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	1
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	1
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).